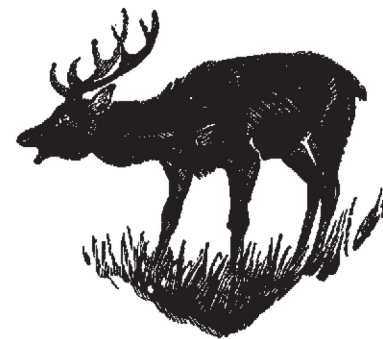


HINDU FABLES



DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI has written

MY BROTHER'S FACE
CASTE AND OUTCAST
THE FACE OF SILENCE
A SON OF MOTHER INDIA ANSWERS
SECRET LISTENERS OF THE EAST
DEVOTIONAL PASSAGES FROM THE
HINDU BIBLE


For Children

GAY NECK *Awarded the Newbery Medal, 1927*
(Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. Selected
as one of the best illustrated books of 1927 by
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GHOND THE HUNTER
(Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. Selected
as one of the best illustrated books of 1928 by
the American Institute of Graphic Arts)

KARI, THE ELEPHANT
JUNGLE BEASTS AND MEN
HARI, THE JUNGLE LAD
HINDU FABLES

Published by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.





HINDU FABLES


FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

By DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

AUTHOR OF "GAY NECK," "GHOND THE
HUNTER," "HARI, THE JUNGLE LAD," ETC.



WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KURT WIESE



E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC., NEW YORK

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER

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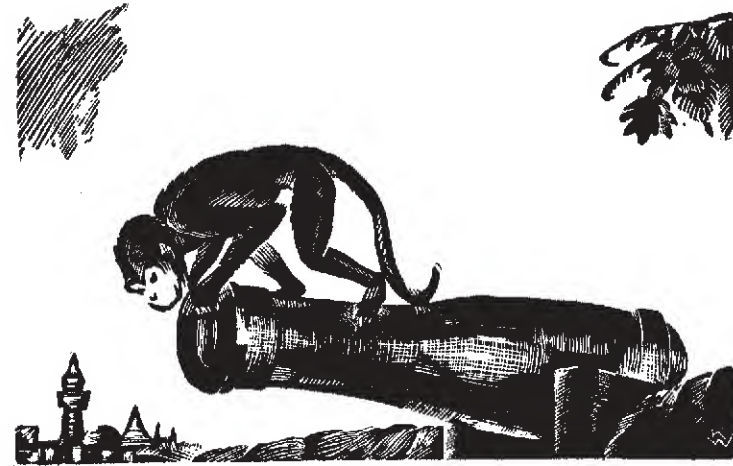
A WORD ABOUT THESE TEN FABLES

IT has always been my ambition to write some tales full of the wisdom of life that children between the ages of four and eight would like. At last, unable to invent anything that would meet their approval, I have fallen back upon the fables that I heard during my childhood in India. There may be finer stories than these, but none more instinct with a sense of "the wise conduct of living."

I should like to tell my young reader one more thing: namely, that the writing of the following pages has been very hard work. I find it much harder to write for the young than for their elders. I fear the criticism of the former as I love their appreciation. Let us hope that the ten fables of my childhood will not fail utterly to please.

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI.

HINDU FABLES.



MONKEY AND GUN

MORAL: *Do not imitate another. Be wise and be yourself.*

A GUNNER was employed by the King of Bharata to fire his cannon every evening at sundown. This had to be done by the clock of the King's palace at six in order to make known to the people of Bharata the exact hour for prayer and meditation. The King believed that the health of his subjects improved if they formed the habit of repose at least for one hour a day.

It was the duty of the gunner to load the cannon properly during the day and to fire it off at the stroke of six so that people far and near would know that it was time to pray to God.

Finding the life of loading and firing the gun rather lonesome, Mr. Gunner adopted a monkey named Ulloo, for a pet, who amused him by doing all kinds of tricks. Not only that, in time Ulloo developed a perfect talent for imitating the walk and movements of his master. Because he acted the part well, people nicknamed him: "The Gunner's Shadow." And sometimes if they saw him alone they used to question him "Mr. Gunner, where is your Shadow?"

As month succeeded month, Ulloo the monkey did almost everything like his master. One day it occurred to him that he should fire off the cannon in the place of Gunner. But that needed practising. First of all, like all animals, he was afraid of fire. Since the gun was an old-fashioned weapon it had to be started by a lit matchstick. His fear of flames of any kind kept him from lighting a match. But at last he overcame his fear and lighted a matchstick. But no sooner had it been lit than he got so nervous at the sight of fire that he flung it away.

That day he sat on a treetop and watched the gunner set off the cannon carefully. He saw how the lit match set fire to the powder at one end of the gun. He also noticed the terrific noise with which the shell shot out of the mouth of the iron monster. Sitting on the top of the tree he went over the entire story in his mind again and again. Though something within him told him to let the gun alone, yet his desire to imitate Mr.

Gunner could not be downed. He must fire off that weapon and enjoy the noise, since all monkeys love to make noises. Then he said to himself "No monkey has ever made as much racket as I will when I light that thing. With a big Z-h-o-o-m it will spit out the shell. Is there another monkey clever as myself in the whole world?"

As soon as Mr. Gunner had loaded the gun the next morning and gone to market all by himself, his pet came down from the tree determined to fire it off.

Though strange forebodings filled his mind, yet he got out a lot of matches from the gunner's kitchen and went over to the cannon. Two or three times he tried to apply a lit matchstick to it; but he failed. He was too nervous. About the fourth or fifth time he controlled himself enough to set fire to the gun-powder. Alas, there was something wrong with the powder that day. It burnt slowly, in fact so slowly that the monkey felt sure that something had gone wrong with the cannon. So in order to find out what had really gone wrong, he went over to the other end, and put his head into its mouth. Of course, inside that metal monster all was dark. But instead of pulling his head out he thrust it in all the more. He wanted to see clearly what was keeping the shot from coming out with a Z-h-o-o-m. Just then he heard a roar of thunder in the belly of the gun. And before he could pull his head out the shot

HINDU FABLES

blew him into pieces. Thus died Ulloo the monkey for imitating his master, the Gunner.

It would have been better if he had enjoyed being a small monkey. Alas, he imitated man till he died of it. It is better to be true to one's own inner nature than to copy the outer movements of another. Here ends the story of Gunner and Ulloo, his monkey.



BUNNY THE BRAVE

ONE day, the King of a jungle, the Elephant, said to his subjects: "Summer is ending; there has been a lot of rain now. The grass and the leaves are plentiful. Now I do not need to be busy all the time looking after your food supply, my subjects. And since I need a little rest, I shall leave you all for a month and go to the seashore."

Of course his subjects, the cows, the deer, the boars, the antelopes, the monkeys, and the rabbits felt sad at his going. But since they realized that their King was good and kind, and since he had been working very hard of late, he had better go on a month's vacation. So the Elephant, tall as a house-top and big as a

HINDU FABLES

cathedral, swung out of his jungle, and pretty soon vanished out of sight like a vast black cloud lost in the silver spaces of the evening sky.

His subjects, though somewhat dejected by his going away, in a couple of days pulled themselves together and set to work. Now that the leaves burnt like opulent torches of green, and the grass that trammelled their feet tasted lush and thick, they set to work to pile up their store for the winter, which would be upon them soon enough.

In the jungle you stock up things just when the heavy rain has fallen and the big rivers and the little rivers are so full that they can hardly sing.

Regarding work, there are two laws in the jungle. One is that all grown-ups do useful and hard work. The other law is that the young must not work in holes in the ground. Nor should they do heavy work on the ground. They are employed in running errands most of the time. There was one youngster in this jungle who was just the right person. He was little Bunny, the youngest of the rabbit household. He was called little, in spite of his big healthy body. While the grown-ups worked, he sang songs and danced all manner of dances to amuse them. This he did when he was not running errands. Bunny was called the soul of any party. They never gave a party without asking him.

One day, as the sun was setting, the jungle-folks

BUNNY THE BRAVE

stopped work. They asked Bunny to dance for them. Just think of the golden gloom of the evening swiftly coming upon them, crickets and other grass-dwellers singing from the floor of the forest; and from the tree-tops the purple, the blue, the yellow and red birds sang trills upon trills, cadenza upon cadenza, till the entire jungle grew truly into a theater of a thousand sweet sounds and scenes. Bunny was dancing a wonderful jig to the music of birds and insects.

But, lo! Suddenly everything stopped. The entire jungle was still, like a frightened child. The cows looked at the deer in surprise. The deer, in utter amazement, looked at the family of boars. Why! Who was this? What does it all mean? Before them they saw Bunny slink away to his parents, and in his place—a big tiger. The old fellow opened his mouth full of teeth sharp as knives, then roared. This he did thrice, as if to clear his throat. Then he said, in a mean, hard voice:

“I see that you have no king in your jungle. I was passing by when I saw that stupid Bunny dance.”

This made Bunny angry. But he controlled himself, as all good young people should. The tiger went on: “I think you need a king. For there is no king here. So I shall be your king from now on.”

To that remark all the animals protested. Even the insects chirped their protest. “Yao-yawoo!” roared the tiger. “Enough,” he said, “I am your king now. I will

kill the lot of you if you protest again. Now listen to me. I shall make my home here. Since I am of a superior race, I eat no grass, nor leaves, as you do. I eat meat. So send me one member—the youngest one—from each family for each day. Tomorrow send me a rabbit from the rabbit family. Day after, send me a deer from the deer family. So on, and so on, as long as I live. Now go home, every one of you. Obey your king. Don't forget to send me that rabbit for my dinner."

Now the poor sweet peaceful jungle folks went to their respective homes, their hearts heavy with pain and their heads full of the thoughts of the morrow.

At last the next day came when Bunny had to be sent to Mr. Tiger to be his dinner. It was just the day before the old King Elephant was expected to be back. Though all their hearts were woe-laden, the animals rejoiced at the thought that in another day's time their master and friend would come back and gore that loathsome tiger with his tusks, as long as a man is tall.

Just the same, everybody felt sad, Bunny's parents in particular. They just could not let Bunny go. But he was so brave that he did not shed a tear, nor did he allow his parents to cry. He sang and whistled as he left home at midday.

Instead of going to Mr. Tiger's at once, he loafed and loitered on his way. About one hour later, he came

across a deep, deep well, 'way down in the ground. As he crept to its side and looked, he saw another rabbit there. Of course he, being clever, knew that water too is like a mirror: in it you can see your own face. Bunny looked at himself in that well very carefully. He also noticed that the water was so far below that it looked like the end of everything. He said to himself, "If I fall there, I shall fall so far and so deep that it will kill me at once." With those words he crept away from the edge of the well. But just before he had done so quite, he whistled. Lo, from the well the echo of his whistling came back exactly as if another bunny were whistling from way down there.

Suddenly, a strange idea came into his head. He shouted, "I have it—I have it! No tiger can eat me now!"

With those words he ran to the house of Mr. Tiger. There Mr. Tiger was, yelling and shouting. He was very hungry, for it was long past dinner time. When Bunny appeared before him, he snarled and scolded fiercely. "Why are you late? What do you mean? Do you know that——"

"Yes, sir, I know," answered Bunny. "But what could I do when another tiger met me on my way here, and wanted to dine on me, saying that he is the real King of our jungle—not you."

"Who? How? What!" exclaimed Mr. Tiger, in utter amazement.

"Yes, sir. It was he who delayed me. He has sent me here to ask you to meet him," added Bunny.

"Meet him!" growled Mr. Tiger. "I shall meet him in single combat and kill him. After that, I shall eat you. Now show me the impostor."

"Thank you, sir," answered Bunny. "Now will you be kind enough to let me go ahead of you, sir, and lead you to him?"

"Get on, get on," snarled Mr. Tiger. The brute never noticed what a well-bred person Bunny was. He was the very soul of politeness.

Bunny went on and on, as if he were on a road that had no end. Every now and then he nibbled at some grass. He needed food all right. But the wretched tiger, who ate only meat, did not eat any grass, so he grew hungrier, and more and more tired. He yelled, he grumbled, then swore, which was very rude. But Bunny was such a gentleman that he never stooped to notice Mr. Tiger's ill-bred utterances.

At last, unable to bear with it any longer, the monster shouted, "Where is that other tiger? If you don't produce him in five minutes, I will gobble you up."

"If you please, sir," answered Bunny, "he is right there, sir. Do you see that hole in the ground ahead? That is his home, dear Mr. Tiger."

"Don't you call me dear Mr. Tiger!" With that rebuke Mr. Tiger leaped right ahead. Lo and behold! Sure enough, he saw another tiger in that hole in the

ground—but that hole was so deep, 'way, 'way down in the ground.

Bunny stood about six yards away from that hole. He knew that it was the old well. He also knew that the tiger was looking at his own self in the mirror of the water below.

But tigers are cruel, hence stupid. So, instead of thinking the thing out, Mr. Tiger, the moment he saw his own face down in that well, shouted, "You rascally tiger, you say that you are the King of this jungle! I say you are not. I will kill you!" He really thought he was talking to another tiger.

Of course the echo came up from way below, shouting the self-same challenge at him: "You rascally tiger. You say that you are the King of this jungle! I say you are not. I will kill you!"

The tiger yelled again: "Do you dare mimic me?" The echo shouted back at him: "Do you dare mimic me?"

Mr. Tiger shouted anew: "You coward, I will kill you where you are!" Then he jumped! Lo, instead of coming upon another tiger, he fell through a long empty hole—oh, so long—into a deep, deep body of water, which had hardly any bottom at all, it was so deep.

Now that he had succeeded in killing Mr. Tiger by letting him drown himself in that well, Bunny went home to bring the good news to his parents.

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He reached home just at sunset. His parents were so surprised to find him alive, that they could hardly believe their eyes. Tears of joy danced in them. Mother Rabbit said, "Where is the tiger, my Bunny?"

Bunny answered, "I killed him!"

His mother said, "You are joking."

But Bunny, who never spoke an idle word, said, "Come with me, and I shall show you his corpse."

It was not only true that the tiger was dead and afloat in the well; but it is also true that when the King Elephant returned the next day and heard it all, he christened that little rabbit—"Bunny the Brave."



ESCAPE OF THE STAG BARASINGH

IF you were a wild deer who had been caged in a zoo, what would you do?" That was the question Barasingh, Bighorn, asked himself when he came from the jungle to the famous zoo of New York city.

He answered himself: "I must escape as soon as possible. I am going to look for a good chance, then take it."

Alas! It is not easy for a 'dumb' animal to do such a hard thing. But Barasingh did it. Since he alone can tell his own story, let us hear from his own lips how he ran away from his enclosure in the zoo.

I am a Sambur, the biggest deer of India. When they trapped me, they measured my antlers. They were very high: forty-eight inches. Every time I bellowed, the

men who caught me jumped. "Bhonk! BHOONK!" I yelled, and they scattered from my presence.

Alas! It was of no use. What could my crying do when my feet were lassoed and tied together with ropes of hide? So I gave in to my captors. Forthwith they shipped me to New York.

Think of me, a son of the finest deer family of India whose cradle was the highest mountains in the world, whose playground was the wild forests, now penned in an enclosure no bigger than your back-yard.

That made me feel very sad. I began to feel sick. My skin got mangey and dirty for lack of exercise. Flies bit and stung me all day long. And the food they gave me was the same all the year round. It was hay, nothing but hay every meal.

Every time my keeper, Mr. James, brought me hay I felt like telling him that I wanted soft grass, luscious twigs and cool spring-water. Alas, how could I tell him? He did not know my language. If he had known it, I would have told him more.

I would have said: "Seeing that I can get no better food, nor better shelter, and since I am getting sicker and sicker I must run away; otherwise I shall die. I feel so certain of death in my cage that I am looking for a chance of escape."

Instead of talking and begging to Mr. James, which would have been useless, I set myself to save my life in my own way. I was determined not to die in my cage.

But how to get out? I suffered deep pain every time I tried to break it by pushing against it with my head. I got so desperate that one day I pushed too hard: it broke my antlers. I felt without them as a king feels without his crown. I looked like a goat now when I saw my reflection in the drinking pool.

The loss of my antlers made me certain that I could not get out by breaking through the bars of my prison. What must I do then?

Just then an idea came into my head. Suppose I run into Mr. James when he opens the door of my cage! Suppose the next time he comes to clean my place I hit him in the wind, knock him over—then leap over his body into freedom!

What an idea! The more I thought of it, the more I liked it. At last it looked as if I could do it.

Because I was determined not to take any chances, I studied my keeper's coming and going every time he entered my cage. That I did for days. Each time, I noticed, the door of my cage opened outwards. The keeper stepped in quickly, turned his back to me, then shut the door with a click. I watched him do it again and again. Every sound and every move that he made I learnt by heart.

One day I decided to do what I had planned. The whole week preceding it I ate very little, drank no water, and pretended to be ill. Mr. James used to come and do his daily cleaning. But since he noticed me ly-

ing sick, he grew more and more careless about shutting the door of my prison.

At last, on that particular day in June, I noticed that he forgot to shut the door. I could tell that he had forgotten, for it did not shut with a click. Apparently he thought that I, being sick, could not run out.

As soon as he had busied himself with cleaning the place, I stood up and walked slowly to the door. He did not see me do that since he was working with his head bent and his back turned. I walked without excitement. After what seemed like a year of walking, I reached the door. I pretended to nibble at its lock. Lo, a miracle! The very pressure of my muzzle swung it open with a creaking sound. Mr. James shouted "Ho!" That dug into me like a goad. I sprang forward in a flash. Behold! I was out of my jail. I was free! What a glorious moment!

It is one thing to get out of a cage, but it is quite another thing to make a good escape. Though I leaped and ran ahead of the shouting keeper, I did not know where to go. Every road I took ended in a city street or a wall. There seemed to be no jungle nearby into which I could plunge. Not only that, but every now and then I heard the heart-breaking honking of a beast on four wheels that passed by swiftly. It was as terrible a sight as a herd of elephants charging.

What was I to do now? I was being surrounded from every direction by keepers and honking beasts. It

looked as if I could not escape. There was no way out of the Zoological Gardens.

But since I knew it to be my last and only chance, I ran at top speed in the direction of a lot of trees. Beyond them I met a high fence. Over that I hurtled. Another miracle. I had cleared the fence. Now I was in open country. Field after field stretched out its arms to receive me. "Free! Free!" I shouted to myself. Thus bellowing and snorting, I reached a river bed. I drank of its water, then followed wherever it led. Though running on a soft river bed is not fast work, I kept on, for I knew that if I went up I would get to a wooded hill. Do not all rivers come from the hills? I decided to stop awhile and look about. The sky beyond was very cloudy. The rolling green countryside was dotted with houses. How peaceful it looked!

Just then in the distance arose the most sinister sound—the baying of hounds. "Hounds!" I exclaimed in terror—Bhonk! If I did not hurry they would be at my throat. So I jumped up on the hard bank of the river, then flew like the wind. But all the time I kept near the river. Though I knew not why, yet I had a feeling that the river alone could save me.*

At last a forest in the distance! I could tell by the odour that the wind was bringing my way that it was not an orchard nor a park, but a real jungle. Ah, how relieved I felt.

*No doubt the stag ran along Bronx river towards Connecticut.

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With that sense of relief I began to examine everything as I went on. First I caught the fragrance of the grass in my nostrils. Next, I heard the wind whistling through my mane. Then I noticed again the cloud-cast sky. Oh, to be free again. What joy, what peace. In the distance the dogs' barking grew less and less noisy. That heartened me. A few more leaps and I was in the dense forest. I felt safe. I felt happy.

By now I was tired and very hungry. I had not eaten much for days. My body needed food. So instead of running any more, I grazed awhile. The taste of fresh grass was like honey to my tongue. I buried my face in it. I ate and ate as if I had not eaten anything for years.

Just then the dogs barked again. Very near now. I sprang forward and ran on as if I were racing the storm. But the dogs' baying did not fade away as I expected. It kept up no matter how fast I went. What to do? How could I hide from them? I was getting tired again. Though my spirit was strong my body was weak. Nearly a year in a cage had weakened me. All that time I had not run much. In fact I had had no exercise whatever. Naturally, my muscles were not in good condition. Now though my mind wished to run, my poor body could not. . . .

Again I heard those dogs! They were yelling louder than before. It went through me like a knife. How had they come so near? Looking over my shoulder, I could see their backs bobbing up and down in the grass and



Oh, to be free again. What joy, what peace!

ESCAPE OF THE STAG BARASINGH

the saplings. I decided to look for a hiding place, for I knew it was useless to run any more. I was too dreadfully tired.

The only thing that could save my life was the river. If I could only hide in its depths. Was its water high enough to conceal a deer five feet high? That was the question.

If I could only play that trick I would be safe. I had done it many times before in the Indian jungle. In order to throw the dogs off my scent I went round and round some trees. Next I zig-zagged about for a mile or so. Then dashing forward in a straight line, I reached the river. I went up and down its shore several times. Now I did my last stunt. I plunged into the stream. Then swam down a few yards. I went deeper and deeper till I was almost drowning. After burying in the water nearly all of my body, my legs, back, throat, neck and the most of my head, I just stuck out my nose on the surface of the river and watched. I could tell by the odour in the air which way the dogs were moving. I could also tell by the smell of the air that it was going to rain. Rain, think of it! If it came in time it would wash away the marks of my hoofs. "Then the dogs won't be able to find me at all," I said to myself. I prayed to the gods of India to rain and rain and rain!

But instead of a shower of rain I got the odour of dogs. They were not barking any more. They were

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silently tracking me. Oh, it was terrible, that odour of dogs as it drew nearer and nearer. By now I could tell that they were all on one shore of the river. The other bank was free of them. Good, that meant that the other shore was the place for me to make for if they came after me in the river.

They drew nearer and nearer. In another ten minutes they would swim after me, I thought. Yet I would not move. Though my heart beat like a drum, I made myself stay where I was. "The dogs," I said to myself, "can get no scent from me since the wind blows from them to me." And any odour of my body that I gave out was washed down the stream. "No fear," I said to myself again: "they know not where I am."

And I was right, I found out in a few minutes. For lo, there were the dogs on the bank sniffing the air. They did not know which way I had gone. Their noses could tell them nothing. Like a lot of helpless clowns they walked about sniffing the air. It was very funny.

Just at that moment, as fate would have it, a dog saw my nose. He barked frantically, then fell into the water. All of them now started after me. And hardly had they come a few feet when the rain began to pour. My prayer had been answered! It rained so hard that I could hear nothing of them. I swam across to the shore, free of dogs. I lifted my body slowly over it.

ESCAPE OF THE STAG BARASINGH

Then under a pelting rain I made my last dash for freedom.

The rain drummed on my back. The thunder roared around me, and the lightning flashed to show me the way. I ran and ran and ran.

I cannot begin to tell you the thrill I felt as drops of rain hit my skin. Think of it, not flies but rain falling in swarms on your body. The feeling of it made me dizzy with pleasure.

Soon night fell. But instead of stopping, I pressed forward. Now I walked. When after midnight the rain had stopped, I found myself in the wooded hills.

I slept there until the day broke. Then, when the sun rose, I prayed to him. After saluting the sun-god, I set out to search for the densest jungle. All that day, no dog barked, nor any man molested me. I drank of a sweet brook. It was like the water of the Himalayas. The taste in the water told me that I had gone far far away from men's homes. I was right. Another day's march brought me to the woods of Berkshire.

Now behold me as I stand on the ledge of a rock and gaze upon the blue lake. Now hear me yell—Bhawnk! Bhonk! Do you hear me? I am free!—Bhoonk: I am free!



BUNNY IN THE MOON

MORAL: *An animal, if he is truly spiritual, becomes immortal as the gods.*

SUPPOSE you are in India with me. As is customary in some places, on the night of the full moon I take you for a short ride on an elephant before bed-time.

As we pass the jungle and open fields, suddenly in one stride the moon rises clear of all the trees and pours its silver silence upon us. That instant a shiver of joy runs through the beast we are riding. The elephant lifts his trunk in salutation to the god of the night and trumpets three times. Having done that, it resumes its wandering.

You will ask me: "Why did Hati, the elephant, do that?"

BUNNY IN THE MOON

"Well, the truth is," I explain to you, "that animals are religious. And of all of them Hati is the most religious. Every Hati considers the moon to be his most beneficent god; for by its light he can travel in the jungle at night. All the elephants respect the moon. They will do nothing to displease Chandra, the moon-god."

Now you gaze at the "beacon of night" long and very carefully. Seeing you are interested, I say to you: "Do you see the white bunny on the lap of the moon?"

After examining Chandra, the moon, carefully, you say: "Yes, yes, I see its head—O look, I see the rest of its white body. How wonderful. I never knew that a bunny could jump so high that it could reach Chandra. Please tell me how it reached the moon."

"I shall tell you the story of that rabbit with pleasure," I answer.

Once upon a time there lived three rabbits in the Himalayas, the high mountains of India. All of them had gathered there to pray to God. For they wished to become very spiritual.

Bunny number one was called Brown. The second one was called Spot, and the third one, being white, was called Snow. They were great friends. Whatever they did they did together.

Since they wished to go to Heaven, they had gone to the Crystal mountains to pray undisturbed by anybody. All their waking hours each rabbit spent in

prayers. Of course they spent a few minutes per day gathering food. But that was all. They never idled a single moment. In three separate log-cabins, neither too far nor too near one another, they engaged themselves in thoughts of God. Thus many years passed.

At last the day came when God heard their prayers. Having heard them, He decided to reward them. Since He knew what was going on in the soul of each rabbit, the Lord decided to test them. So He sent forth Chandra, the moon-god, with this command. "O moon, the coming evening you do not rise till midnight. Therefore, instead of playing about Heaven, go down to the Himalaya Mountains and ask for food of the three bunnies who are very religious. After you have dined with each one, return hither and tell me how Brown, Spot, and Snow treat you."

After bowing low to the Lord, Chandra set out for the Crystal Peak. Being a god, he went very fast and in no time reached the hut of Brown just as the sun was setting. He knocked on the door of the log-cabin. Brown, who was cooking his supper, opened the door. And when he heard that Chandra wanted something to eat, he gladly divided his own supper with his guest.

After eating his supper, Chandra thanked his host and set out for the place where Spot lived. The moment he heard someone knocking on his door, Spot opened it and said "Welcome." The moon-god thanked

him, adding: "I am hungry; can you give me something to eat?"

"With pleasure," answered Spot. "I was praying so hard that I forgot all about supper. If you wait I will cook all that I have and serve it to you."

"No, no, I do not want all, only a part of your supper," protested Chandra.

"Sir, you are welcome to all of it." Saying that, Spot disappeared into his kitchen. There, with the help of the moon, he started a good fire in his oven.

After the moon had enjoyed his meal and thanked Spot for his kindness, he set out for the house of Snow. He had to knock many times on Snow's door before he could get any answer. . . . At last, after a long series of knocks, a rabbit white and calm as the heart of a crystal opened the door. His eyes were clear as a pool in the woods. His voice was sweet as a silver flute's. "Welcome, O Stranger, to my hermit's hovel."

Chandra answered: "I seek for a host who can give me something to eat. I have climbed too many peaks and I am very tired. Can you give me a large meal?"

Snow said: "Will you not enter and make yourself comfortable while I go and make your supper ready?"

"With pleasure." Saying that, the moon entered a dimly lighted cabin and squatted on the floor. There was no rug, no chair, nor table. The entire place was bare and hard, yet there was a sweetness in the air that pleased Chandra very much.

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After excusing himself Snow went to his kitchen to cook. There what he beheld made his heart sink with anxiety. For though he had some wood to make a fire, he had nothing else. No cabbage, no potato, not even an onion. He had gathered no food for a week, eaten nothing, nor drunk a drop of water. So deeply had he been absorbed in praying to God! He had forgotten everything else.

Now behold his trouble. He had asked a stranger to supper and had nothing to serve him. He also remembered the old Hindu law which says: "He who does not give shelter, food and drink to a guest loses all the good fruits of his prayers. He can never attain to Heaven."

What was he to do now? He must do something. So he started the fire. Then a very strange plan came to his mind. He was faced with the most painful duty of his life. He made up his mind. And he started to carry out his plan.

He set the table. That is to say, he put a cup and a plate very near the fire. Then he went to the sitting-room and asked the moon-god to come with him.

After Chandra had seated himself before the plate and the cup, the white rabbit said: "Sir, I have been so busy praying to the Lord the past week or ten days that I have laid up no food, nor drink. There is nothing in my house that will make a meal."



"Every night when I shine upon the earth he will go with me"

BUNNY IN THE MOON

"Then why did you bring me here?" protested Chandra. "I shall get up and go."

"No, no, do remain seated, I beg of you." The bunny further requested: "Please do me this favour. Will you eat whatever meat I can cook, please?"

At that his guest promised: "Seeing the difficulty you are in, I will eat whatever you can cook."

"Good," shouted the rabbit with joy. "Since I have nothing but myself, I shall throw my body into that fire. Please eat me when I am roasted." . . .

"No, don't, please"— But the moon-god was too late. Before he could lay his hand on Snow and stop him, that hare had plunged into the terrible flames. Not a sound of pain made he. Not even a word of suffering came from his lips.

Having done his duty, when the moon flew up to Heaven, he beheld on God's lap the most beautiful rabbit. After receiving his salutation, the Father of Heaven and Earth said: "Behold, O Moon, the rabbit that jumped into the fire a few minutes ago. Of the three friends, his love of prayer was so great that he rarely ate or drank. He had nothing but himself to give you. Without doubt, he is the most spiritual soul. How shall I reward him? His reward ought to be great."

The moon answered: "Lord, if it please Thee, grant me a favour. Please give me that bunny to be my

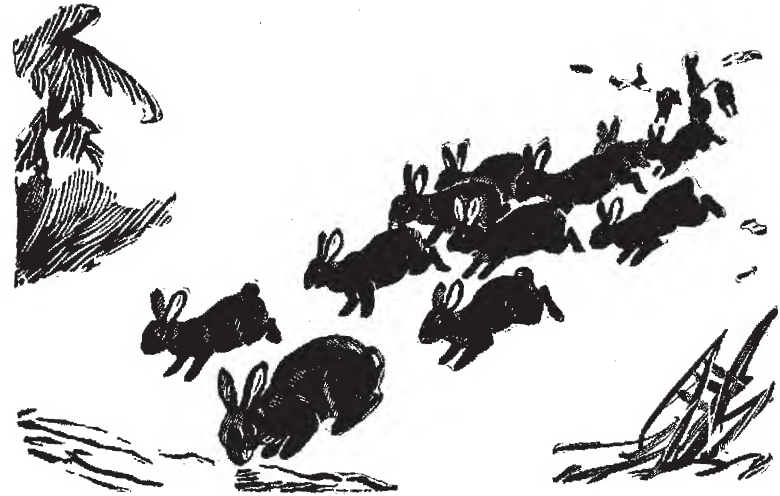
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friend. I will carry him on my lap no matter where I go. Every night when I shine upon the earth he will go with me."

God said: "You are granted the favour you ask. Let this little animal shine with you upon the whole world, so that men and women looking up at you will say: 'May we be as devoted to praying to God as was that bunny that we see in the moon.'"

That happened long, long ago. Since that time the bunny and the moon go together wherever Chandra sheds his silver light. Not only men but animals too, such as the elephants, love and look up to him.

Behold, my child, the moon rides very high, and our own Hati has reached the door of our home. It is time for you to go to sleep.



HOW A SINGLE BUNNY OVERCAME A HERD OF ELEPHANTS

IN the valley of the river Ganges was a large lake of sweet water on whose shores grew delicious grass and herbs.

One day hundreds of rabbits led by their king, Chandraputra, meaning *son of the moon*, came to that lake for a drink of water. Its water tasted so sweet that they decided to make their home near it. Of course the high grass gave them shelter, and the other herbs plenty of food. Thus flourished a whole kingdom of rabbits on the bank of the lake.

Before many years had passed the countryside surrounding the lake was named Shasakarajya—the *kingdom of bunnies*. No man nor beast troubled them. For

all of them respected rabbits who were nice and very well-behaved.

However, there was one rabbit who, though nice, was always getting into mischief. He came to be known as "Bunny the Brave the Second" after Bunny the Brave number One who, you remember, killed a tiger by drowning it in a well. Like the first, the second Bunny was very brave and clever. Sometimes people said that his mind was as sharp as a razor.

All the big animals that knew of the Shasakarajya never went near it, lest they should molest the little fellows that belonged there. But at last the place was overrun by a herd of ignorant elephants who knew nothing of the rabbits and cared not to learn. The result was that wherever the wild beasts stepped, they crushed dozens of bunnies under their feet. So panic became the daily life of the poor little ones. They did not know how to protect themselves from those vast brutes who seemed to be hills on four feet. Wherever those hills went, destruction spread like fire.

Unable to bear it any longer, the king of the rabbits called a meeting of all his friends. And when they had assembled in his court room he said, "Is there any way that can prevent these elephants from harming us?"

One by one all the older rabbits said, "No. We cannot fight them. We are too small and helpless."

"O king," advised an old fellow, "let us leave this

place to these cruel beasts. We can go away somewhere else and live in peace."

"Yes, yes!" agreed all of them save one.

After the noise of "Yes, yes!" spoken by so many had quieted down, a small bunny rose with a twinkle of mischief in his eye. Seeing him, the king said, "Hallo, what have you to say?"

"Your majesty, I have seen certain things on a mango tree near the lake. I think I can drive the elephants away."

"What! What does that young fool say?" exclaimed all the rabbits.

"I think I can drive them out of our kingdom after moonrise to-morrow night."

"If you do not succeed, how shall we punish you?" demanded the king.

The little bunny answered, "If I do rid the country of these pests, what will be my reward, your majesty?"

"You are full of mischief," exclaimed the king. "If you do not succeed, we shall punish you as we please. But if you really get rid of the elephants, for two months you will not be spanked nor punished for any simple mischief that you may get into."

"I agree. Thank you, your majesty." Thus the little fellow sealed the bargain.

That afternoon he went near the mango tree on the lake shore, and watched two human beings, father and son, gather fruits. They had a basket tied to one

end of a rope, while the other, the loose end, they passed over a strong branch on high. Every time the father pulled the loose end the basket left the ground, then rose higher and higher till it reached the top of the tree. There the son, who had already climbed up, filled the basket with ripe mangoes. He shouted, "Full!"

At that the father slowly gave more and more rope till the whole cargo of mangoes reached the ground. The old man now took the heavy basket and emptied it into a pushcart that stood near-by. Thus he and his son gathered fruits all day long.

Towards sundown the boy came down from the tree after the last basket-load of mangoes. After it had been emptied into the cart the father pulled the basket away up. Then he tied the loose end of the rope round the tree. Now the two human beings pushed their cart-load of ruddy mangoes home.

The next morning long before the men came, the little rabbit reached the mango tree and hid himself in a hole under it. He waited and watched them work all day. At sundown when the father and son had emptied the last basketful of mangoes and for a moment turned their backs to it, the bunny got out of his hole, swiftly jumped into the basket, and hid himself under some leaves that were there.

Now that all the fruits were nicely placed in the cart the old man, without looking into it, hoisted the

basket up in the air. After he had secured the loose end of the rope round the tree trunk, he joined his son and pushed home their cart-load of crimson fruit.

Soon night fell, the moon rose, and the whole lake looked like a mirror of silver. Insects hummed, owls hooted, and rabbits came in flocks to bathe and dance in the moonlight. It is the custom of the rabbits to dance in the moonlit glade.

Just when their dancing had become most intense and they were almost lost in fun, a ghastly noise of trumpeting and rushing elephants fell upon them. Ere they could make good their escape, many thirsty elephants had rushed towards the lake. Though the rabbits ran as hard as they could, a large number of them could not get out of danger in time. Bunny, in his basket on high, heard it all. He trembled with anger. He was so furious that he almost jumped down from the tree in order to attack the elephants. But he decided to stay where he was and carry out his plan.

After the shrieks and trumpeting had died down, and the elephants were playing quietly on the shore, the little fellow raised his voice. He spoke as if he were speaking from Heaven like a trumpet.

"Beware, elephants, beware!"

At that strange cry, the big beasts stopped playing. They listened carefully. "Beware, elephants, ere I destroy you!" thundered the brave bunny. A shudder of terror went through every *Hati*. Each one listened

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most carefully. "You have angered the moon-god. Beware, ere he destroys you!" A hush of terror and wonder fell upon all.

The elephants said in whispers one to another, "Listen, ye foolish folks. We have angered Chandra, the moon-god. He is speaking. Listen."

"The god of night is speaking!" exclaimed the chief of the elephants. "What have we done to anger the moon?"

"I am the white hare who sits on the lap of the moon," resumed the rabbit from his basket. "I am a messenger from the sky. Do you know that Chandra has sent me down to tell you what you have done?"

The chief of the elephants spoke for his followers, "What have we done? Tell us, O most powerful hare!"

"You should know that in the calm waters of this lake the moon looks as men and women look into mirrors. Every night he gazes in this mirror and combs his snowy locks. Alas, since you came here the blessed god has not been able to comb his hair, for he can see nothing in the water that you disturb! Your boisterous and stupid playing in the water disturbs the lake so that it reflects pieces of silver and not the moon. The god is dishevelled and angry. If you do not stop playing he will punish you."

Here the brave rabbit stopped. He could hear the frightened breathing of the elephants.



At that strange cry, the big beasts stopped playing. They listened carefully

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Next morning when the fruit gatherers came to work, they lowered the basket. Hardly had it touched the ground when out jumped a rabbit and ran for his life. The two men thought that they had been dreaming in broad daylight.

While they were wondering about the bunny in their basket, he ran as fast as he could go. For he wanted to reach the court of the king Chandraputra without delay.

At last he was there. After saluting the king, then the assembled rabbits, he asked permission to speak.

"Speak!" commanded Chandraputra.

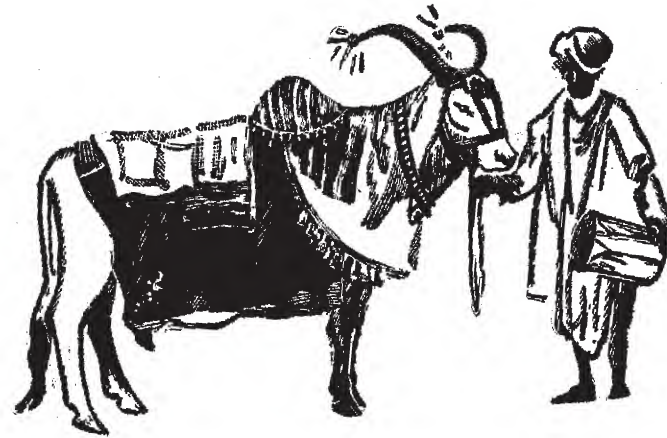
"Your Majesty, the elephants have been driven away," he answered.

"How?" asked the king.

"That is a secret," explained the little chap. "Now I am free from being spanked for the next two months, as you promised?"

"Of course, my dear Bunny the Brave. What a question to ask! From this day on, the king commands all his subjects to call this noble rabbit 'Bunny the Brave II,' for he has done the bravest thing that anyone has done since the day of Bunny the Brave I, who killed a tiger single-handed."

"Yea, yea," shouted the courtiers, "Bunny the Brave the Second! Jai, jai—victory, victory!"



THE COW, GOLDEN HORN

MORAL: *He who is without fear has no enemy.*

HER real name was the Cow of Plenty. But after she was sold to Rajah the King, she came to be known as the royal cow, Golden Horn.

She was bought for the royal stable from her master Krishaka, a farmer, because she was beautiful, wise and fearless. It is said that Krishaka was paid with her weight in silver by Rajah. Not only that. In order to show how he loved her, the King had her horns covered with gold. After that had been done, he had set on the tips of her horns gems that shone like stars. That is how she came to be called Golden Horn.

Because everybody knew how wise and unusual she was, the whole kingdom allowed Golden Horn to go

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wherever she pleased, and eat whatever fodder she chose. That, indeed, was great honour.

Not a person in the royal household ever worried if Golden Horn did not come home at sundown. She could spend the night in the jungle full of tigers if she wanted to. Her fearless heart and wise head protected her everywhere.

Soon Golden Horn gave birth to a baby bull. He was named Ratna Singh or Jewel Horn. The reason they called him Jewel Horn, though he had no horns yet, was that after his birth for months his mother gave more milk than any ten cows put together.

Rajah, her owner, said: "Her son has brought us plenty of milk. Behold, she pours it like a stream of jewels into the bucket. Let us call her calf Jewel Horn."

Apart from giving floods of milk, Golden Horn had to do her duties of a mother. As soon as his horns had sprouted a little, she took Jewel Horn with her to many strange pastures in order to educate him.

She said: "You must go to school. My boy, I am your mother. I must teach you all I know. We cows are not like human beings who hire teachers, we have to educate our own children by ourselves.

"First of all, learn to think clearly. Always keep calm. And whenever you face an enemy, don't fear him.

"I want you to learn the ways of men and beasts.

THE COW, GOLDEN HORN

You should know what befriends and what harms us. You should sharpen your wits. Strengthen your heart. And exercise your body."

"But mother," objected Jewel Horn, "in order to succeed in fighting, all that I have to do is to use my horns."

"Not altogether," answered his mother. "You must use your brains, then your horns. If you use only horns, you may not succeed."

Thus conversing one day, they trotted off in the direction of the tiger-infested jungle. It was late afternoon. The wild animals were still sleepy. Those that were awake were stretching themselves in their dens. Black panthers sharpened their claws on the trees on which they had slept all day. Large leopards whined as they woke. Far off a sher (tiger) grunted as he leaped out of his lair. Darkness fell softly into the jungle.

When she noticed that the dusk was coming, Golden Horn said: "Come, Jewel, let us start homeward. It is getting late."

Slowly they sauntered back. But soon after their backs had been turned to the deep forest resounding with the yell of wolves, the roar of tigers and the trumpeting of elephants, Golden Horn felt that some dangerous beast was following them. She whispered: "Go slowly, my son. The calmer you are, the less anyone can frighten you. Don't be frightened. He who is frightened by any animal is killed by the same."

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"And you, mother, do you feel afraid?" questioned Jewel Horn.

"No, though I hear some sinister sounds," she answered.

"Look, mother, what is that purple, black, now orange patch in the high grass before us?"

Golden Horn hissed at him: "Hush! Stop. Stand still." Hardly had she warned him when with a roar a tiger landed ten feet from where she had stood.

"Grr-rr," he roared again. A shock ran through both the others. But clever Golden Horn stepped forward as if she was not at all disturbed. Stamping her hoofs on the ground she scolded the tiger: "Who are you? How dare you interrupt our evening walk?"

"Interrupt whom, what?" growled the tiger in bewilderment. For he had never seen such horns on a cow nor heard such speech.

"Do you not know I am Golden Horn, the King's cow? I am the Cow of Plenty. I am walking with my son, Jewel Horn, a hero of the first water. Please be good enough to jump away from our path. We are on our way home to the King."

"Not a bit of it," growled the tiger. "Cow of Plenty are you? Good. I will kill you: that will give me plenty to eat."

"How dare you insult my mother?" shouted Jewel Horn. "If you talk like that again, I will gore you, though my horns are only three inches long."



"Grr-rr" he roared again

THE COW, GOLDEN HORN

That speech from a mere calf puzzled the tiger more.

"Just a minute, Mr. Tiger," pleaded Golden Horn. "Forgive the rudeness of my son. He does not know who you are." Then, putting her mouth to her son's ear she whispered: "The moment I bellow three times, attack him. Put your horns into his stomach. Leave me to do the rest." Then, quietly turning to the sinister beast whose stripes were like shining steel in the light of the risen moon, Golden Horn said: "O Sir, why kill me who am the Cow of Plenty? My horns are of gold. On their tips I wear diamonds. If you bite off those pieces of gold and diamond, you can sell them to a goldsmith. Then with the money you will be able to buy many cows. That will give you something to eat for many days."

"That is a good idea," chimed in the striped beast.

"Besides," continued Golden Horn, "the King will have my horns capped again with gold."

"Capital idea," shouted the tiger with joy. "Then again I will take the gold from your horns and buy some more cows to eat. Thus you will be mine own Cow of Plenty. What a name! Cow of Plenty!"

"If that pleases you," said Golden Horn.

"Now," said the tiger, "how can I get the gold off your horns?"

"That is easy. Come forward. I will lower my head. Then bite off their tips with your teeth while I hold my

head steady. Do be kind enough not to wrench my horns too hard, won't you?" she begged.

"Of course—anything to oblige such a good cow." Saying that, Mr. Tiger advanced at her lowered head. . . . Though he was bewildered by the strangeness of all this and his heart was full of strange fears, yet he moved on very slowly. Step by step he came on. The earth seemed to tremble under his weight. At last he stopped. It seemed to Golden Horn that an hour passed before he opened his mouth and closed his teeth slowly on the tip of one of ore of her horns.

That instant she bellowed three times like three thunder claps, deafening his ears and almost freezing his muscles. At the same moment a sharp something pierced the roof of his mouth and his brain. From below something struck his side and knocked him over. Howling with pain, he rolled on the ground once or twice.

He was so hurt and frightened that he did not dare to get on his feet. Instead, he slunk away out of the sight of the two cows as if he were they, and they were two tigers. . . .

Seeing that they had not only saved themselves but also taught that tiger the lesson of his life, Mother and son walked briskly towards the stable of the King.

"What an escape!" they exclaimed every few yards that they covered. And both Golden Horn and Jewel Horn knew that it was not by force that they had won.

The next day after they had been bathed and fed, Jewel Horn said: "Mother, you are right. Horns alone cannot protect a cow. He must use his brains."

Golden Horn answered: "Even our brains are not good enough unless our hearts are calm. You must try to sharpen your wits. But, above all, be calm. If you are calm, nothing can frighten you. And he who is not frightened can beat tigers or any other animal. Our fear kills us before we are killed by an enemy. He who is without fear has no enemy."





MONKEY VANARAJ *

MORAL: *Cherish your friend as you take care of your own eyes.*

THERE was a river named Godavari. On its shore stood a mango tree where a baboon made his home. He called himself Vanaraj—king of the forest, though he owned only one tree.

However, that tree was big enough to grow more mangoes than two monkeys could eat. But Vanaraj would not allow another baboon to come near him. He was a stern soul; he never courted the company of any other animal, male or female. So he dwelt solitary on his tree, eating all he could of its fruits and throwing

*This story appears in its purest form in the Panchatantra. But I give it in the form in which my nurse related it to me when I was a child in India.

MONKEY VANARAJ

away the rest to any animal that happened to pass below.

One day a crocodile named Kumeer drew up on the shore to lie under the shade of Vanaraj's tree. The scaly monster opened his mouth, begging for a mango. The sight of him amused the baboon.

He said: "What a mouth! A long piece of black wood opens; lo, it reveals two rows of white teeth as long as a tiger's fangs. Surely I shall give you a mango. Open your mouth wider, Kumeer, wider still. That's it. Now—chuck!"

An enormous mango, red as a strawberry, landed between the crocodile's jaws. "Good throw," murmured the monkey, congratulating himself. But the crocodile was so happy chewing that mango that he could not even thank his friend on the tree top. At last, after he had devoured the whole fruit, he said: "Will you be my friend?" The baboon said: "Why not? You are no monkey, you won't climb up and take away my tree from me. I will be delighted to be your friend."

From that day on they became friends. Every afternoon Kumeer came along for a friendly chat and refreshments of delicious fruits. In exchange for the monkey's gift of mangoes he told him stories of the river-world. About his own wife, about sharks, about fishes of all kinds.

Sometimes, while he was eating and felt too busy to interrupt the business of his mouth, he allowed

Vanaraj to tell him of the creatures of the tree-world: of apes, leopards, birds and squirrels. In fact, he waxed so eloquent about the upper world that one day he informed Kumeer about the secret place of his own heart and what a treasure it contained.

That evening, after he had bade Vanaraj goodbye, the crocodile swam straight across to his home at the bottom of the river under the other shore. There he gave his wife a mango, a present from his friend. Then he told her what the monkey had told him that day about the secret place of his heart.

She interrupted him ere he had finished his story. "I know all about it. The body of a monkey is sweet to eat for it has lived on such fine fruits as mangoes. But sweeter than his body is the taste of his heart. And in his heart is the Mukta, pearl, which is the sweetest jewel in the world. Husband mine, please invite that monkey to visit us."

"But how can he live in the water?" wondered Kumeer. "He cannot come here to the bottom of the river without drowning."

"But I want him to drown," she explained, blandly.

"Why, what?" questioned Kumeer in dismay.

"I have tasted mango," she continued. "It is sweet. That monkey will taste sweeter. Then after I eat him, I will wear the pearl that lies hidden in the secret place of his heart. I want that pearl. This afternoon Mrs. Shark, whom I met in the Avenue of Deep Water

strolling with her son, told me that all I lack is a pearl that dwells in a baboon's heart. You must get me that pearl, O my incomparable lover and husband."

Kumeer protested most vehemently. He insisted that to kill a friend for the sake of a trinket was the most sinful thing to do. "If we commit such a sin, what will happen to our souls after we die? Heaven will not have us; even Hell will give us no shelter. No, I refuse to murder my friend for the sake of a pearl. No."

Alas! she grew so angry and irritable that she made his life a torture day and night. All day she forbade him to go out of her sight. And every night she scolded and cajoled him in turn. Seeing that he had reached the limit of his endurance, Kumeer said: "All right, you can have him to eat and to wear his pearl. But how am I to do it? What about the salvation of my soul?"

His wife answered: "That is easily managed. I will see to it that your salvation is not ruined. In fact, I will risk my soul's salvation by killing him. All that you have to do is to bring him here within my reach."

"That is impossible," exclaimed Kumeer. "How can I bring a live monkey here to this shore of the river without drowning him?"

"Of all crocodiles you are the most foolish," she scolded anew. "Invite him to dine with us. Bring him across on your back. Then when he gets here I will rise up from the bottom of the river and kill him."

"But——"

"No more buts," she laid down the law to her husband. "On the morrow you take him my invitation. In the afternoon bring him here. Leave the rest of the doings to me. Good-night." And she fell asleep like a tired child.

But poor Kumeer felt as if his heart would break under his ribs. All night he suffered in mind and body. Sleep was out of the question. So he sat up in bed and prayed the rest of the night for forgiveness. "O God, forgive me the sin that I am about to commit." He repeated that sentence minute after minute, hour after hour till day broke, rousing his wife from deep slumber.

After a most miserable breakfast, he was sent off to invite Vanaraj. The monkey was only too glad to see him. "A friend," shouted he from the mango tree as he plucked and threw down the most delicious mangoes. "Ah, dear Kumeer, I have been pining away because you have not come these last days. Is all well with you? Does felicity dwell in your heart? Is your wife well?"

The crocodile answered him briefly. "Friend, my wife who has heard so much about you wishes to see you. She invites you to dinner tonight. Now, will you come on my back this afternoon to the other shore of the river and honour us with a visit?"

"Indeed, I will come. Anything to please you and your wife," the monkey agreed with joy.

That whole day they spent together gossiping and eating mangoes. In fact, Kumeer had forgotten all about the sinister purpose that lay before him at the end of the day. The hours passed swiftly like an arrow to its mark.

A little after four o'clock Vanaraj said: "It is time for us to start. . . . Why do you look so gloomy?"

"Nothing, nothing," answered the crocodile. "Since start we must, let us begin. Now, get on my back please. Are you there?"

"Your back is quite comfortable," answered the baboon. "Now let us see how fast you can swim. Good-bye, my mango tree. I will be back before dark."

Poor old monkey! He did not know that death was waiting for him on the other side of the river. On the contrary, he chattered from the crocodile's back like a magpie. He gave all kinds of advice to fishes that swam by, made fun of crabs for their habit of walking sideways, and told dolphins that if they knew how to climb trees, they would swim better than they did. He laughed and talked like a clown in a circus.

Suddenly feeling the crocodile dive, he shouted: "Ho! there. Don't go so far down. I cannot breathe in the water. Do you take me for a silly fish? Hey, what's this? You are crying. Why, dear croc, are you shedding tears?"

"I weep for you, my friend," answered Kumeer. "My wife will kill you in a few minutes. Oh, why

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were you born with a pearl in your heart. Boo hoo, hoo!"

"I don't understand you. Explain yourself," demanded Vanaraj. "Stop boohooing. I can't hear a word you say if you boohoo so much."

After wiping his tears away, the crocodile told his friend what was in store for him. He hid not a single thing from Vanaraj. "It is your heart and a pearl that have brought this sin of murdering a friend on me. I know God will never forgive what I am doing. But, my friend, what can I do? I must please my wife."

Vanaraj, who was the most quick-witted of all monkeys, took in the situation without any delay. He knew for certain that if he did not do something at once, he would soon be dead.

"But what can I do?" he murmured to himself. "How can I get out of this? O, my poor monkey's head; it does not work very fast."

Just then the crocodile dived again. That acted like an electric shock on the monkey. A strange idea occurred to him. Since a drowning man catches even at a straw to save himself, Vanaraj acted on his new idea.

"Ho, listen, friend Kumeer. Why did you not tell me before we started that your wife wanted the pearl in my heart? Unfortunately, I did not bring it with me."

"What do you say?" demanded Kumeer. "Your heart is not with you?"



He laughed and talked like a clown in a circus

MONKEY VANARAJ

"No, of course not. My heart is a precious thing. I do not carry it about with me. I keep it on the topmost branch of my tree. If you had told me what you wanted, I would have brought it with me. I would do anything to please my friend's wife."

"Well, this spoils the entire purpose of my bringing you here," exclaimed Kumeer in disgust.

"Not at all," chimed in Vanaraj. "Let us go back to the mango tree and fetch that heart of mine with the pearl that it contains. We must satisfy your wife."

"Good idea. How clever of you to have thought of it. Let us go back."

With those words they started back. Not very far away he heard his wife calling. "Hoi, hoi, where are you going with that pearl-hearted monkey?"

"We are going to get the pearl," he flung back at her, and swam away as fast as he could go.

His speed was so great that in no time they were back at the mango tree. Just the instant the crocodile had touched the shore, Vanaraj leaped off his back and raced up his tree like a frightened squirrel. At last, finding himself safe on its topmost branch he shouted: "Oh, you fool and betrayer of true friends, go back to your greedy wife and tell her that I prefer to keep my heart and pearl to myself."

The bewildered crocodile asked: "Are you not coming with me?"

"I do not go anywhere to be devoured," retorted

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the monkey. "Do you think I could live a moment if I left my heart behind? I told you that wild tale to save myself from death. You are a fool, and your wife is a monster. Go home and tell her that God has punished her for trying to betray a friend. Begone! Do not sit there and shed more crocodile tears. Begone!" Taking a few hard green mangoes from the tree, he hurled them at his old friend. At last, disappointed and heart-sick, the wretched crocodile sank into the river.

After a few days Vanaraj, waking up one dawn, beheld two crocodiles lying under his tree. "Hoi, hoa, what do I see there?"

"I am your old friend, Kumeer," answered one of the reptiles. "This is my wife. We have come to ask your forgiveness."

Both of them begged Vanaraj's pardon three times. Though they had lost him as a friend, yet they wanted him to know they were happy that his clever escape had prevented them from murdering a friend. They were indeed glad that he was alive.

Vanaraj forgave them readily. He flung down two ripe mangoes for them to eat. From that time Mr. and Mrs. Kumeer visited him every day. All three of them ate mangoes and gossiped away whole afternoons. In the course of years they became fast friends. And nothing unfortunate arose between them to hurt that friendship.



PIGEONS OF PARADISE

MANY years ago, long before grandfather's grandfather was born, it is said that God was asked by a very young god why there were no pigeons in Heaven. The little deity knelt at the foot of the golden throne on which sat the Creator and said: "O Almighty Father, we have every creature in Heaven but pigeons. And I would not have known how beautiful pigeons are had I not leaned over the parapet of Heaven and seen Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet in flight. They were like amber and amethyst against the morning sky. May I not have them in Heaven? I beg you, merciful Father!"

There were other gods present who heard the divine child's speech.

"Tigers, thrushes, eagles," one after the other repeated, "rabbits, roses and weeds, all of them have become perfect, so we have them in Heaven. But no one has seen a pair of pigeons here. Are there no perfect pigeons? For were they perfect, they would be here."

"I am sure Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet are perfect," murmured the kneeling god as he rose to his feet.

Glancing at Chandra, the Lord of All said: "O divine moon, go down to the earth and find out if Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet have yet become perfect. Time has come for them to become perfect and come hither to gladden the heart of the gods."

Those words sent a thrill of gladness through the heart of everyone present. All the divine beings bowed in gratitude to the Eternal Father and began to sing His praise.

Now Chandra bowed three times to the Lord, then set out in search of the two pigeons that the little god had seen flying against the morning sky. Like an eagle of crystal the moon swung over the golden ramparts of Paradise in a moment.

After flying through the sapphire pastures of the sky, he alighted on the white mansions of the Himalayas. Thence to the granite gorges that led to the emerald ledge whence the Ganges falls "like a flight of silver stairs from Heaven let down."

After following the river through the valleys of

Kashmere and the glens of Garhwal, he reached the plain of a famous banyan tree where the two pigeons lived. Chandra reached this a little after sunset. The moment he saw the two pigeons on the top of the vast banyan, he lost his heart to them.

Indeed, they were the most beautiful birds that the god had ever seen. And when he heard them address each other as Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet, Chandra had no doubt that they were the pair of pigeons that the little god had seen and God Himself wanted in Heaven. "Are they perfect enough to go to Heaven?" the moon asked himself.

The next morning in the light of day, Chandra saw many things. First of all, he noticed that the banyan tree was very old. It was vast as a palace of jade and strong as a hill. No doubt the pigeons had built their nest in it because it was safe from floods. The flood in that part of India rose now and then and swept everything before it. But the one thing that the Ganges could not sweep away was that banyan tree.

After looking at the tree, the pigeons, and their nest where their two young ones were growing, the god of night said to himself: "Only he who is unselfish is perfect. I must find out if Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet are utterly unselfish. I will become a silver leaf and grow to be a part of their trees; that will enable me to study the pigeons day and night."

So while Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet reared their two

babies below, above them Chandra grew into a full-blown silver leaf. The parent birds taught their children all kinds of things. Before they were allowed to fly away in order to make their own nest, they mastered how to gather food and how to build a nest. They were taught how to fly in the sun and what to do in a dust storm. And last of all they had to take at least one lesson on how to escape from the talons of a hawk.

Finally, in order to drive their last lesson home, their parents literally flew before a hawk at the risk of their own lives. As soon as they saw a hawk in the air, they flew up to him whilst the youngsters watched their flight from the tree.

It was a terrible thing for the children to watch. Their heart grew sick when they saw the bird of prey swoop down on their father. Inch by inch the hawk gained. It seemed that there was hardly a yard of space between him and Ruby-eye. Just at that moment, Pinkfeet beat her wings fiercely and dashed between the two. That upset the hawk. He lost his aim. He snatched at the mother bird.

But lo! he had missed. What good fortune. The youngsters in the nest felt happy now. Alas! not for long. The hawk was attacking their father once more. He had already circled in the air very swiftly and risen high. In another minute he fell—like a thunderbolt.

Ruby-eye flew for his life but, it seemed, too late. The hawk's talons opened right over him. That instant, like a vaulting frog, he tumbled. And instead of burying his talons into his body, the hawk caught his tail. With one wrench, Ruby-eye separated himself from his tail-feather and dove down to the banyan tree.

The poor hawk looked like a fool as he put the feathers in his mouth, thinking they were the body of Ruby-eye. At last, seeing that he had nothing but feathers, he flung them from his grasp and flew away to hide his shame.

In the meantime, Pinkfeet was giving her grown-up babies her last advice. "Now that you have been taught and shown all that your father and I know, you are free to fly off and make your own nest wherever you please. We have taught you all we know."

The moon, who was now a full-grown leaf on the tree, said to himself: "They are quite unselfish. They risk everything, even their very life, for their children. Wonderful, wonderful! They deserve to live in the gardens of Heaven."

The next day, the two young pigeons said good-bye to their parents and set forth in quest of a land where to make their home.

Though they were both crying as they saw their children go off, yet both the parents felt happy. For each said to the other: "Are they not wonderful? If we are

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judged by them, surely it will bring us credit. Look, how our son's wings cut the air."

Then the father answered. "Do you see our daughter? She floats across the heavens like the moon. Our children are good and noble."

That instant, a voice from the high heavens said: "Your offspring are wonderful because you are both unselfish." That puzzled the pigeons. Each one said to the other: "Did you hear those words?"

Just then the thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and the summer rains began to fall.

"God is going to send down a flood in order to put their unselfishness to a final test," said the silver leaf to itself as it curled up when the first rain-drop struck its back.

What the moon had said came true. The rain that had begun was not to stop until the Ganges rose in flood almost destroying the banyan tree and the two pigeons.

Minute after minute, hour after hour, it thundered and rained. Chains of lightning flashed and scorched the sky. Dark clouds upon dark clouds came rolling from the southern seas. Like heavy sheets of silver, the rain pressed upon the earth. The river below, the two birds noticed, was rising already. Thus the first rainy day passed into night.

The next day the lightning bared its white teeth like

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a beast, the thunder growled, while the rain drummed on the leaves of the banyan tree without ceasing.

On the fourth day it stopped pouring. That was very fortunate. For both the pigeons were very hungry by now, since they had had no food for three days. Seeing that it was not raining any more, Pinkfeet said: "Let us go and get some food before it starts again."

"I will go in search of food. You stay here," Ruby-eye answered. He flew far and wide, and what he saw frightened him. He noticed that in the villages where men dwelt, the Ganges had overlapped her banks. And seeing that the flood was coming, the villagers were fleeing in different directions.

But since he must get food, instead of brooding over the flood, he picked up a lot of fine rice that the human beings had thrown away in order to lighten the loads that they were carrying on their backs. After feeding himself, then filling the pouch in his throat with the finest rice like grains of the whitest sugar, he flew off to his wife in the nick of time.

Just after he had reached the banyan tree it began to rain again. The pigeons, now that they were well fed, hid in their nest in order to keep themselves warm and dry.

Another day and night passed. But the rain would not stop. It seemed as if the whole world was wrapped in shrouds of water.

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Since the downpour never stopped even for a minute, Ruby-eye and his wife had to stay in their nest and go without food. "Well, one day's fasting is not much," they said as they went to bed.

Alas! the next day the same thing happened. They had to go without food. It rained steadily for five days more, driving the poor birds nearly mad with hunger.

It was about the seventh day that there was an hour when the rain stopped shooting silver arrows. No more sound of water was in the air. Stillness spread upon the world like the sigh of a child. At once the two pigeons flew off in search of food.

Lo! wherever they went, they saw nothing but water. The villages where men lived had vanished from view. Here and there tree-tops stuck out above the water like tufts of grass. Nothing, nothing but a wilderness of mountain-high water everywhere!

The two birds said: "It is the flood. Where can we look for food? How are we to live till it dries up?"

They searched in vain for a grain-field or a human being. Hour after hour, under a cloudy sky and over cruel-looking water, they wandered. Not a blade of wheat, nor a grain of rice, nor the presence of man greeted their eyes. So they decided to make another plan.

Ruby-eye said to Pinkfeet: "You go one way, and I the other. That is better than both of us looking at the same spot. If you find food, eat all you can, then



It seemed as if the whole world was wrapped in shrouds of water

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bring me some. If I find food, I will bring you all that I can carry."

She hesitated a minute. But when she saw his hungry face and read the tale of hunger in her own body, she decided to do as he had said.

"I go northward, husband," Pinkfeet said as she flew in that direction. "I will meet you in our nest soon. Farewell!"

About an hour or so passed. Ruby-eye found no dry ground anywhere. And since it began raining again, he decided to fly back to the banyan tree. Fortunately, he made it without wasting time or strength. But Pinkfeet was not there!

He worried about her. "What could have happened to her? Shall I fly and search for her?" But when he looked at the rain falling like slabs of silver, he knew that it would kill him in a few minutes if he dared to fly. Since he could not go forth in search of her, he felt most unhappy. He kept moving about in the nest restlessly. He acted as if wherever he stepped, he was pierced with burning needles. He was so miserable that he forgot all about the flood that was devouring the banyan tree inch by inch. He craned his neck frequently in order to catch the sound of his mate's wing-beats. Even the loudest thunder could not keep him from listening. He listened and listened, though in vain.

Suddenly he heard—something. What was that?

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Again he heard it. Could it be the voice of Pinkfeet? His heart almost jumped out of his skin. He was wild with joy. So again he listened. This time most intently. Yes . . . that was her voice. But what was that? A man speaking in answer to her. How could she find a man?

"Where are they, anyway?" he grumbled. "In this black rain, I can see nothing. Where is she?" He called to her: "Koo-Koom-Koo."

She answered: "Koo-woo-koo—husband, are you there?"

"Here am I," he shouted, "in the nest."

"I have a guest for you," came her voice, drawing very near.

In a few moments Ruby-eye's heart nearly froze at what he saw. . . .

There was Pinkfeet in a small cage held by a man. Then the two of them were conversing: "Did you say," went on the man, "that this tree will not be swept away by the flood?"

"Now that you are safe on our tree, please let me out," begged Pinkfeet. "I don't like this cage. I wish to speak to my husband."

"Of course I will let you out as soon as I get on a comfortable limb of the tree."

At last, seating himself on a nice branch, the man opened the cage and let Pinkfeet out. She swiftly went

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to Ruby-eye. Her soul was filled with joy to find him safe at home.

After the sweet surprise of finding one another had passed, Ruby-eye asked in a whisper: "Where did you find this man?"

"I almost forgot him," she answered. "He saved my life."

Then she told him briefly how, when looking for food, she found a boat loaded with odd bits of furniture and a man drifting about. Soon she approached it. Seeing her the man shouted: "O pigeon, I beg you to save my life. My home has been devoured by the river. All I have is this boat and a few sticks of furniture. And here is a handful of rice that I have saved. Since I can't eat the white grains without boiling them in hot water, you had better eat them."

Pinkfeet, who was very hungry and tired, at once accepted the man's invitation. She alighted on the boat and fed herself. Hardly had she eaten enough when she noticed that the boat was shipping water. "Why," she almost screamed at the man, "you will sink in a short time if you do not get off this boat!"

That poor wretch answered: "Where can I get if I get off this boat? I see nothing but water everywhere. Since I am going to sink to death, I might as well go down with my furniture."

Pinkfeet said: "No. I will not let you drown your-

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self. I will help you to save your life. If you will row hard, I can direct you to our tree where our home is."

Just then the rain began to pour. So the man gave her shelter in a cage on his boat. Now he set to rowing hard while Pinkfeet directed him to the spot where the banyan stood. It took them a long time to get to the tree, but they had arrived there a few seconds before the boat filled completely with water and sank.

That was the story of Pinkfeet. Out of the kindness of her heart she had saved that poor man from drowning.

"You have saved a life. God will reward you for it," exclaimed Ruby-eye.

Pinkfeet answered: "Husband, now we must make this man comfortable. He is our guest. We must make every sacrifice that a host is expected to make."

They did all that they could for that poor man. But what could two pigeons do for a human being when it rained day after day? The river rose higher and higher, burying under it more than half of the banyan tree. Save its higher branches, wherever the two birds and the man looked, a forest of charging, swirling flood greeted their eyes. How it frightened them!

But what they saw without was nothing compared with the agony of hunger that they felt within their bodies. As if thorns were being pushed into their stomachs. So great was their suffering.

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At last, unable to bear it any longer, all three of them sobbed like children. But finding no relief in crying, they began to think together. "How to get food—where to get food?"

The tree in which they had been sheltered never bore fruit. It only grew bitter-tasting leaves.

"Food, food, food," they repeated day and night. They were so hungry that it kept them awake all the time.

Hardly had they spent more than one sleepless night when the rain stopped and the sky cleared. Joy and peace possessed their hearts. Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet at once set out in quest of food. They were lost in the joy of flying. For a few minutes they forgot their hunger.

Alas, the sun shone so fiercely that they got tired very soon. Then, as they looked for a place to alight on in order to rest their wings, they were struck dumb with what they beheld. Not a tree, not a rock, not a blade of grass was to be seen. Everything was buried under water. Not only that. They also noticed that instead of going down, the flood was still rising. Walls of water like herds of raging bulls rushed and roared.

That struck terror into the hearts of the pigeons. In abject fright they set out in the direction of their nest. It was not easy to reach it. The heat of the sun felt like burning weights on their backs, making their wings flag. They could not beat them any faster than

a windmill raises its arms when the wind lags. Ruby-eye felt as if his wing was creaking with pain.

It took them hours to get home. At last, seeing them return the man shouted: "Jai-victory. Have you found land? Have you asked men to come and rescue me?"

The answer that they gave him sent a shaft of pain into his heart. But controlling himself he remarked: "Anyway, we can lean over a branch and take a drink of water from the rushing flood. That is something."

Two more days of scorching heat passed. The leaves of the banyan that were not yet under the water dried and crackled in the torrid heat.

Below, the flood rose another inch or two. The two birds and their man guest reached the limits of their endurance. At last, unable to bear it any longer, the man got angry and scolded Pinkfeet: "Why did you save me from drowning? If you had only let me sink with my boat, my miseries would have been over. When one drowns, one suffers but once. But now look, I am dying by inches under your roof. O why did you invite me to be your guest? Why?"

These words angered the two pigeons. But they knew that a guest is like God—above reproach. So they went into the inner apartment of their nest where the man's angry talk could not reach them.

"An angry guest brings misfortune to his host," Pinkfeet whispered to her husband. "It would be better for my soul to kill myself and give my body to

that man to eat than let him die slowly under our eyes." With the light of terrible determination she said: "Ruby-eye, my love, can you kill me, then serve me for food to our guest?"

"Horrible, horrible," he groaned. "I will not hear of it. Are you mad?"

"But, husband," she protested, "I set out to save that man's life. I have brought him here as our guest. It is meet that I should be utterly unselfish and that I should do all I can to keep him from dying. The holy books say that he who does not serve his invited guest even with his own life invites his soul to hell."

"No, no," protested her husband, very loudly. "It is I, not you who must die. Not you under any conditions." Thus the husband and wife disputed. Each wanted to die for the other.

Suddenly they heard the man screaming at them. It was so loud that it reached even the inmost part of their home. "Food, food, food," he was howling.

"That settles it," said the husband to his wife. "Go tell him to light a fire."

"What are you saying?" said Pinkfeet in between sobs.

"Men eat cooked meat," he answered. "Please ask him to make a fire. Not a word more."

Seeing that Ruby-eye was determined to die in her place, she went out and said to their guest: "We have found something in the inner apartment of our nest

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that you can eat after roasting it. Now, can you make a fire? We do not know how to make it."

His heart jumped with joy. In a second he broke two branches of the tree, then began to strike one of them with the other. Because they were dry, they caught fire quickly. He put them in a fork of the tree, then piled on them some short twigs. After that he blew on them. His breath seemed to make the fire burn fiercely. In a short time it seemed as if the whole tree would catch fire. He said to Pinkfeet: "Now bring the stuff to roast."

But she did not have to fetch "the stuff." Hardly had the man spoken when Ruby-eye came dashing out of the nest. He flung himself into the fire. Though it caused him much pain, yet he said not a word. Like a hero he stood it all. Like the talons of a hawk, the fire pierced him, yet he made no moan.

"I cannot live without him. I cannot live without him," cried Pinkfeet with sorrow.

The man was so puzzled by the male bird's sacrifice that he did not know what to say to her.

"I will not, I can not live without him," she cried again and again. "Let me die. What is life without Ruby-eye?" Lo! before the man could put out a hand to prevent her, she too had jumped into the fire.

A sense of disgust seized the man. "Oh, what a vile sinner I am! I have sacrificed two most beautiful and

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unselfish persons for the sake of my stomach. O God, I pray you to forgive me my sin. Forgive, O God, forgive me."

Just then a miracle took place. Suddenly a silver leaf on the banyan tree grew rounder and rounder, then fell down on the fire. In a trice the red flames turned into cold silver. In another minute's time, the moon took two living pigeons and flew up to Heaven with them.

Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet looked golden as wild honey, and in their eyes shone a light that was not of this world. Lo! they had become perfect and beautiful as angels.

Through their unselfishness they had become perfect beings, fit to live with God in Paradise.

In a few days the flood subsided. And that wretched man descended from the banyan tree. But instead of dragging home his hungry body, he sat on the ground and spent all his time in prayer. He prayed thus: "O God, if those two pigeons can soar to Heaven, by Thy Grace I too can rise to Thee, grant me Grace; forgive me my sins."

Ruby-eye and Pinkfeet, seated one on the right and the other on the left of the throne of the Almighty, joined their prayers to the man's on earth. "O Lord of Mercy! O All-love and All-compassion, we pray Thee to grant that man what he seeks."

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Their prayers proved irresistible. The Lord said: "That man is forgiven." And lo! instantly that hungry and weary man became radiant and strong as a god.

He did not go back to his field and cattle. Instead, he traveled everywhere as a minstrel, singing his ballad called "The Pigeons of Paradise." And it is said that whenever a thief or any other wicked man heard the story of Pinkfeet and Ruby-eye, he gave up his evil ways, and forthwith led a life of joy, peace and purity.



BUNNY THE BRAVE SAVES BRAHMIN THE PRIEST

THAT morning Brahmin the Priest did not know that he would have the bad luck to meet a tiger as well as the good fortune of being saved from him by the famous rabbit, Bunny the Brave. It was most strange. How did it come about?

Let me tell the tale from the very beginning. One day a tiger was caught and left in a cage near the jungle where Bunny lived. That terrible killer tried his best to get out of his prison; alas, he could not. He sought to bend the bars of his cage with his paws. He flung himself with all his weight upon its door. He gnawed at the steel floor under him. In fact he did all that any beast could to set himself free. But, all

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is vain. The bars, the door, and the floor of the cage proved too strong for him.

Finding his animal strength utterly worthless, he now decided to use his cunning. For he remembered he had said, "Where brawn fails, brains win." So he sat in his cage and begged of every passerby to open it from without.

First he begged of a stag. "Free me, O friend, free me. Of all tigers I am the most dejected and wretched."

"But," the stag answered, "you will kill me for food the moment I free you. It is not for me, your dinner, to free one who devours him." With those words he bounded off into the forest.

The tiger felt very humiliated and angry. But all the same he controlled himself and begged of the next passer-by who came along. This one was a black bison. His black silken coat shimmered with colors as the sunlight fell on him. The tiger said, "O mighty one, O horns that humble the Himalayan peaks, O thou black opal dripping with fire-dimming colors, open the door of my cage to bestow freedom on me. For it I will be grateful to you forever." The bison lifted his muzzle and with a voice deep as the distant thunder, said: "You killed our young calves when free. How can I trust you again if I set you at liberty? A tiger never becomes vegetarian." With those words he too passed into the sun-smitten hot jungle, that burnt like an emerald furnace.

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Seeing that other animals would not help him the tiger decided to beg of man. Alas, that day no man came near him. He spent the following night beset with thoughts gloomier than the heart of the forest. He was most unhappy.

The next morning as luck would have it Brahmin, the priest of the village not far off, after his bath in the river by the woods, happened to pass by the tiger's cage. Of course seeing that probably his only chance for freedom had come he began to whimper like a kitten. That attracted the priest's attention. "Where are you, my mouse of a kitten," he called most endearingly.

"Here I am, my Lord," whined the tiger.

"Ho," exclaimed the priest, "you are not as small as your voice. Indeed you are a largish cat. What do you want, O beloved of beauty?"

To that the striped one answered, "No one ever called me 'Beloved of Beauty' before. I like it. Will you kindly set me free, O most compassionate Brahmin?"

"I am afraid that will not do. How can I tell that you will not kill me for food the moment you are out of your prison. After all you are a tiger, you know." The Brahmin felt very sorry for the caged animal, but he let his intellect rule his heart for a moment.

The tiger set up a terrible yell of woe. "Who will set me free? Who is there generous enough to forget

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a tiger's past? I am truly repentent. I will hurt no man if a man opens the door of my cage."

"I must be kind to him," the priest spoke to himself. "If he says he is repentent why not give him another chance? I myself would not like to be in prison. Then why should I insist that he be imprisoned like this?"

After reasoning in that fashion, Brahmin's heart having overridden his intellect, he answered aloud, "O thou grim killer, I shall do as thou beggest provided thou wilt promise to hurt no man the rest of thy life." The tiger promised readily. He was willing to promise anything in order to get out of that cage. After that there was nothing for the priest to do but to open the door of the cage. A monkey that was leaping from one tree to another overhead shouted, "Don't do it, priest." A crow flying by cawed, "You are uncaging your own death, Brahmin." But he to whom they spoke was so busy undoing the bars of the cage that he paid no heed to the voices overhead. One, two, three, at last he took down the last bar. Then with great courage he pulled open the door. In an instant like a flash of a gold sword the tiger leaped into freedom. He jumped about once or twice to make sure that he was truly free. Lo, and behold, with his third leap his old nature came back to him. In time shorter than the shooting of a star he crouched and roared, "I will eat you. I am too hungry. I will breakfast on you."

BUNNY THE BRAVE SAVES BRAHMIN THE PRIEST

"But you promised—" the Brahmin tried to plead with him while the sunlight made the bars on his body flash in orange, amber and purple-black.

"When I promised I did not know how hungry I was. I am faint with hunger, I must eat you. Gr, Grr gr," he roared anew.

"This is most awkward, and most unfair," Brahmin roared back at the horrible brute, "unfair, do you hear, you are unfair!"

"Unfair," howled the tiger with rage. "You expect a fellow starving for days to be fair? All right. Come with me. If you can find one out of four creatures who will agree with you I will spare your life. Come. Is that fair?"

The priest retorted, "Fair enough for a cat but not for a man. I will abide by your condition. Let us seek out four souls."

They set out together in search of four different beings. Soon they met an old donkey. To him they told their story concluding it with these words, "Judge between us, O master of kicks."

The donkey took no time to do his part. He said, "All men deserve to be killed. Look how man treats his old friends. I served him in my youth. I carried loads for him all my life. He beat me, he abused me, he made me suffer unspeakably. Now in my old age he has set me free. Why? Because I am no good for carrying loads. I roam the jungle in constant danger,

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why? To find something to eat. I do not love man. Man deserves nothing but death."

When he heard those words the priest's heart grew sad within him. For the first time in his life he realized how cruel man can be. But not yet quite beaten in his game with the tiger he said, "I admit the donkey is right. All the same there may be some one who will say a kind word for me."

"There is none. However let us talk to three more people. After that I will eat you," remarked the tiger with finality.

The second person they came to was an old ox. The ox said almost the same thing as the donkey had. "But," he added, "man kills aging oxen and eats them. I who knew that ran away before they thought of taking me to the slaughter house. In his youth the ox works for man. In his age he is man's food. There is no place for my race even after death: men take our skin and make shoes out of it. No, man is terrible. He deserves nothing but death."

In his heart of hearts the priest had to admit that the ox had told the truth. He was saddened beyond words now. Yet hoping against hope he led the tiger onward. Soon they saw the sacred tree, Banyan. Brahmin, hoping that the tree would be more compassionate than the beasts of burden asked it to judge between himself and the striped one. Alas, what the tree told them was almost death-dealing in its effect. "Kill



The priest approached him and laid before the little rabbit his most eloquent plea

BUNNY THE BRAVE SAVES BRAHMIN THE PRIEST

man," it shouted finally. "He robs me of my fruit. He takes shelter under my boughs from the sun and rain. Then as thanksgiving he cuts me up into pieces and burns me as fuel. I see nothing but death that he deals to all. He deserves what he gives. Kill man, O tiger. Kill without mercy."

"Ho, did I not warn you? Grrr, shall I finish you, O priest," growled the tiger.

The priest who was very sorry and sorely in need of a friend still maintained, "I agree with the tree. Man does great harm to many. All the same I have not given up hope yet. Let me ask of one more soul, the fourth person. It interests me to learn his judgment. If he condemns me as have done the ass, the ox and the sacred tree I will surely allow you to kill me."

Just then Bunny the Brave, who long ago killed a tiger single-handed came along. He was out for a walk. The moment he beheld Brahmin and the beast his mind at once took in the situation. For, being very brave, his head was always very clear. Bunny was known for his cool head and warm heart.

The priest approached him and laid before the little rabbit his most eloquent plea. Then the tiger after licking his chops related his own case. Of course Bunny sat solemnly like an innocent monkey and listened to both of them. His heart went out to the poor bullied Brahmin. He sat in silence for a long time.

HINDU FABLES

Seeing him so slow to pronounce his judgment the tiger raged at him. "I am hungry, be quick about it otherwise I will eat both of you."

Bunny said, "Where did it all start?"

The priest answered, "At the mouth of the cage."

"Good," rejoined the rabbit. "Let us go there. I want to see where you two stood. For I cannot imagine the situation."

"Well," groaned the hungry tiger, "Let us go thither."

So the three of them went where the open cage stood. "Now," asked Bunny, "where were you, my priest?"

"Here, at the mouth of the cage," answered the man taking his place.

"Where were you, my Lord," he asked the tiger with great respect. The latter jumped up and took his place in the cage.

"What was the condition of the door? Put it in the same state as before so that I can judge fairly. Be quick about it, I am in a hurry."

The priest shut the door and bolted it. One, two, three, at last the last bolt was shot. "What next, Mr. Rabbit?" he begged, wiping the forehead with an end of his shawl.

"Nothing more, O venerable priest," he answered bowing low before Brahmin. "That ungrateful tiger is locked in his cage. That is my judgment."

BUNNY THE BRAVE SAVES BRAHMIN THE PRIEST

"What—whao, grr grr grr, haloom!" That tiger roared with anger and hate.

"Pay no attention to him, O venerable priest," Bunny consoled the man. "Go home now to your duties. But remember this. Treat your friends, the beasts and the trees kindly. Farewell." With those words Bunny the Brave skipped into the jungle as an angel vanishes into Heaven.

It is said that Brahmin remained true to the rabbit's command. He built hospitals for old animals and cut down only those trees which were dead. He led a very noble life of love and kindness to all.





RAGHU, THE SON OF A COOK

THIS is the story of one of the brightest men of India. And that it has a moral for all of us we shall learn as the tale unfolds itself under our eyes.

Like many fine men of the world, Raghu the Law-maker was born in poverty. That was not all: when he was about six years old his father died. And since his mother, Tara, was a woman of delicate health he had to help her to earn their living. That meant a great sacrifice for Raghu. Though a very bright boy he had to give up school. From now on he worked with his mother in the kitchen of a rich tradesman. And since Tara could not work very hard the little fellow did more than his share of the day's work.

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We all know that there is no disgrace in honest work. Both the widow and the orphan did their duties with a sense of pride. Raghu felt prouder than his mother, for of all the boys of his age he was the only one who worked for his own upkeep. Every afternoon when he was engaged in play with the boys and girls of his village, he bragged to them of how he carried burning charcoal; how he lighted the fire in the oven, and of how he cooked some of the dishes for his mother.

One afternoon, unable to bear his continual bragging, his employer's son, a boy of eight, said to him: "You may be a Pramanthan fire-maker, but you do not know how to read and write. Most of us can read any book, and you cannot read at all."

Those words cut Raghu to the quick. He excused himself, and leaving his companions on the playing field, he ran home to his mother. Tara, whose eyes had become almost blinded and had grown red because of the smoking oven into which she had been blowing, gazed at him a long time before she could recognize her own boy.

"Oh! Raghu," she said, "I feel as if I were going blind. My eyes hurt as if someone were thrusting burning needles into them."

His mother's suffering he felt so keenly that he forgot his own. He took her by the hand and led her out of doors. After leaving her there, he went into the

kitchen and blew into the smoking oven. Though the smoke hurt his eyes and almost choked his nostrils, he blew and blew till the fire burnt fiercely.

When he came out, he made his mother promise that whenever the oven smoked she would send for him to tackle it.

"On no account should you blow into it yourself, mother."

From that day on, when he made the fire in the morning Raghu made it very well. Not only that, he also saw to it that there was enough dry kindling wood piled up beside the oven so that in case the fire went out, his mother could re-start it without any trouble.

In those days people had to be very particular about the fire because matches had not yet been invented, and coal not yet mined.

Since Raghu was too young to make it by striking flint on steel over thin kindling wood, each dawn he had to carry an empty brazier to a neighbour's kitchen, and after having it filled with about a dozen pieces of burning charcoal, brought it home and started the oven for his own mother ere she had finished her bath and prayers. It is said that he carried those burning charcoals day after day, month after month without spilling a single one on the roadside. So very careful was Raghu.

He served his widowed parent most faithfully. The older he grew the more he did for her. She used to

say to him: "Though I have lost my husband, in you, my son, I have found a man who is as helpful and kind to me as if you were your father grown small."

Though he loved to work for his mother, Raghu was not happy. He wanted something that she could not give him. It was schooling. He wanted to learn to read books. Only those who had money were taught to read, like the sons and daughters of the tradesman in whose house Tara and he toiled. Since he had no money, the doors of the school were shut to him. Whenever he saw one of the chambermaids take his master's children to school to the house of the village Brahmin (priest), he was filled with the desire to do the same. His soul just hungered for knowledge.

It was after he was eight years old that he was given a new duty. In the place of the old chambermaid, Raghu had to take the sons and daughters of the house to the Brahmin's. He enjoyed it very much at first. But after a few trips to the school he became more unhappy than ever. He used to say to himself: "Why do I have to leave them at the door of the palace of knowledge? Why can't I too go in and get learning? What have I done that I should toil only with my hands? O God, I pray to you! O Divine Mother in Heaven, give me knowledge. Let me go to school."

Thinking and brooding like that, he grew very thin. Tara noticed it. So one evening under the stars, while

she was telling him the stories of Rama, Arjuna and the other heroes of old, she asked him: "What troubles thee, my blessed one? Why do thine eyes wear the veil of sadness? Thy laughter no more rings in the kitchen. Even thy tears thou dost not shed. What sorrow hast thou taken for a companion? Who has broken the being of thy gladness? Speak, O pearl amongst sons."

The poor child, unable to control the pain in his heart any longer, burst into tears and buried his face in his mother's lap.

Now for the first time since her husband's death Tara felt what it meant to be poor. She too burst into tears. Not to be able to give such a fine boy any education hurt her very much. He was not only a good worker with his hands, but he used his head so well. In fact, he was the brainiest child of his age. And to think that his brains would never be used! "What a pity!" Thus lamented Tara in her mind.

On the contrary, she said aloud to him: "God, the Divine Mother of the Universe, helps the helpless. Let us pray to Her. I would not pray if you wanted a toy or money. But pure knowledge we can beg God to give us. Nothing but good comes from unselfish learning." After praying nearly an hour, they silently walked home.

Now that the hot season was upon them the priest,

a white-haired man of seventy, decided to hold his classes at sunrise instead of at nine in the morning. So every morning, while the dew was glinted with iridescence as the rays of the rising sun struck athwart the fields, Raghu, after leaving his master's children at the school went to the Brahmin's kitchen, filled his ladle with burning charcoals and brought them home in order to make his own fire. Though it was hard to carry a ladle back and forth for half an hour, it was the only convenient thing to do. For thus he could do two things at once, particularly in a household whose master scolded his cook harshly if dinner was served late. The boy loved his mother, so that the very thought that she might be scolded hurt him terribly. He would leave nothing undone in order to spare her any humiliation.

Raghu was so absorbed in getting his master's children to the school and in bringing home the charcoals that he never noticed the Guru, their teacher, who watched his coming and going almost every morning. The old man's eyes, the moment they saw the little chap, told him that Raghu was a very fine fellow. He had the most loving heart.

But the Guru wanted to make sure that along with his tender heart Raghu had a clear and quick head. That is why he kept an eye on the poor widow's son.

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He had not spent his seventy years in vain. He could tell a noble child when he saw one. About Raghu's character he felt quite sure. Now he waited to be assured that his brains too were unusual.

One day, walking by the tradesman's house, he found Raghu making a bow and some arrows with a split bamboo and a string. He noticed the boy was cutting the bamboo with a piece of rusty steel.

When the white-haired, god-like man asked him why he was using a rusty thing instead of a knife, he was told: "My Lord, we are too poor to own a knife. I picked up this piece of steel by the roadside, I whetted a part of it on a stone. Now it does the work of a knife."

The Brahmin asked him further: "What will you do with the bow?"

"I will give it to my employer's son. He promises to teach me reading and writing if I make him a bow and half a dozen arrows."

Pleased with his words, the old man questioned him: "Are you sure you have brains enough to make good use of reading and writing?"

But in the place of answering that question, Raghu asked: "Do you always take pupils because they have brains?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the teacher. Then he added: "I wish I could take only boys with brains. Alas! my son, I take only those pupils who can pay me for teaching

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them, whether they have brains or not. I prefer to teach those whose heads are long but ears short."

"But, sir," asked the boy, "are not asses with long ears useful? They carry heavy loads for man."

The Guru said: "What do you like to do—carry sacks of sugar on your back, or taste sugar?"

"I want to taste sugar, my Lord," answered Raghu, timidly.

"So you don't want to be an ass. Good!" exclaimed the priest. "Farewell, my son. Give your mother my blessings. May your head grow longer every day."

That evening when her son gave her the message of the priest, Tara said to Raghu: "Let us pray to the Divine Mother." They prayed so long that they went to bed late. Naturally, it made Raghu sleep longer the next morning.

After shaking him gently, Tara said: "Arise, my son. The children are ready. Hasten with them to the school."

After quickly washing his face, the boy rushed out to take his master's sons and daughters to the Guru's house. When he reached it, what he saw surprised him. Lo! the priest was waiting for him with a ladle full of burning charcoals.

After receiving all of the young people, the master said: "Raghu, where is your ladle? Where am I to pour these charcoals for you to take home?"

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Then it dawned on him that in his haste he had forgotten all about it. It was already very late. If he did not get home with the charcoals his mother would be delayed in starting the fire in the oven. And he knew how severely she would be scolded for serving dinner late.

It was out of the question that he should spend fifteen more minutes in running home for his ladle. Also it hurt his pride very much to beg the teacher to lend him his. "No," he said to himself, "I will not borrow his ladle. But what am I to do now?"

The very thought that because of his own neglect his mother would be scolded and humiliated hurt him the most. He could not spend one more minute hesitating about those charcoals. He must take them now even if they burnt him, and hurry home.

The Brahmin spoke again: "I am waiting for you, my son."

Those words stung him like hornets. In sheer despair he was going to thrust out his two little hands . . . Just then an idea—altogether a new one—rose in his head.

And swift as the leap of a leopard he carried it out. He knelt on the dusty road, put his two hands together, then scooped up all the dust that they would hold. Then, rising to his feet, he said: "My Lord, please put the fire on this dust." That gave the old teacher a tremendous surprise. He looked at the boy before him



After thanking the Guru, Raghu hurried home to start the fire

with the eyes of wonder and respect. He heard the child's voice saying: "Hurry, my Lord, time presses. The fire cannot hurt me now." As if Raghu was the teacher and he the pupil, the Brahmin did as he was told. He carefully poured the fire on the lad's dust-laden hands, then added: "You deserve to be taught everything. Your head grows longer every day. Your wits are strong as the tusks of an elephant."

After thanking the Guru, Raghu hurried home to start the fire, just in time. Oh! what a happy moment.

That afternoon Tara was almost shocked to hear that the Brahmin had come to call on her in her kitchen. She was afraid that Raghu had done something wrong, and that the priest had come to tell her about it. Poor woman, she prepared herself to hear the worst that could be said against her child. She could not believe her ears when she heard: "The boy is full of intelligence."

Then the Guru went on: "There is nothing too dear and too precious for him. His head grows longer every day. His intelligent manner of taking those charcoals this morning has convinced me that all knowledge belongs to him by God-given right. I do not want a penny. Please give him to me to teach, I beg you. He has a head full of brains."

Tara, woman that she was, shed tears of joy. "Is it possible," she murmured, "that our prayer has been answered?"

HINDU FABLES

"Prayer or no prayer, please give me the boy," begged the priest. "All my life I have wished that I be given one wise man to teach. Behold! God brings him in the person of your son within my reach like a ripe fruit hanging from the tree of fortune."

Now Tara stopped crying and said very slowly: "Sir, the—the boy—is—yours."

"Thank you, thank you," mumbled the old Brahmin with a catch in his voice. In order to avoid shedding tears of joy like a mere woman, he went out of the kitchen and walked home. "What a glorious opportunity for me!" he repeated aloud all the way.

Thus began Raghu's education. In two years' time he became so learned that he earned not only his but his mother's living by teaching children younger than himself. Tara, instead of cooking for strangers, now kept house for her own son.

Ten years later, when the old Brahmin died, Raghu was asked to take his place by the Panchayat, the Government of the village.

In another ten years' time he became the greatest teacher of Bengal. From the province of Bengal his fame spread all over India. Even now after hundreds of years, no man is considered a philosopher who has not studied the law books that Raghu, the son of a cook, wrote.

Though he taught many rich pupils, he lived in perpetual poverty. For whatever money he made by

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teaching the rich, he spent in giving scholarships to the poor.

Long after Tara, when Raghu died at the age of eighty, he left behind no wealth but well-trained young students who were called "Sons of Raghu."

